

Welsh Fruit Stocks Raspberry Growing Guide



Raspberry canes are of the genus *Rubus*. Their multifoliate leaves grow on a single cane that grows up from the roots of the parent plant. The canes can grow fairly tall and can be spiny or spine-free and can produce fruit from June until the autumn, depending on the variety.

We contract-grow high grade raspberry canes for the NSA in isolated fields, and then plant stock from these fields into our own propagation beds, which are PHPS certified at E or A grade. The 1-year-old canes from the established beds are dug through the winter months, with some remaining root material left to produce canes for the following year.

Summer fruiting raspberry canes are floricanes and fruit on last year's growth. Every year their shoots will spend the summer growing rather than fruiting, and will produce fruit the following summer. This means that with a new bed, from the second summer onwards your raspberry bed will be made up of last year's canes that will flower and fruit, and new shoots that will emerge to fruit next year.

Autumn fruiting raspberry canes are primocanes and need treating slightly differently. As they don't fruit until the autumn, the canes that emerge through the spring and summer will produce fruit that same year.

In both cases, the old cane is left intact after planting or fruiting so the roots have the benefit of the nutrients in the cane throughout the winter months. Before spring the old cane is cut away to encourage new growth and the raspberry roots then respond by sending up new shoots (or suckers).

We despatch canes from November/December until March or April (depending on the season). They are sent bare root, and, unless specified, as standard canes, which have been cut down to 10-18" before shipping.

We can also supply **long canes** in most summer varieties. These will not be trimmed down, and they will produce fruit on that cane in their first season. They will, however, need plenty of extra care to help them establish and fruit (as you're asking to cane to fruit as well as produce a root system and send up new shoots), and postage costs can be considerably more as the parcel will be much bigger.

Planting

Location and Soil

Raspberry canes prefer well-drained loamy soils or lighter well-watered soils. They will not like heavy, clay soils that are not free-draining, so try growing them in a raised bed or ridge to aid drainage in these situations. Neutral pH soils suit the canes best, although they can survive in a moderately acidic soil better than some plants. They are best planted in full sun to aid fruit ripening, but a more shady position is also suitable. As the canes can grow quite tall, thought should be given to protection from strong winds.

Preparation

Prepare an area of ground with well-turned soil, down a spade's depth, in rows 5-6' apart (1.5-1.8m). Allow enough room for canes to be planted 18" (45 cm) apart. Compost can be mixed into the soil during the preparation stage, but as the canes do not like too much moisture held around their roots, we do not recommend putting too much wet compost or fresh FYM directly around or in a trench under the roots. As they are also very shallow rooting, it is better to mulch the canes after planting.

Support

Summer fruiting canes will need to be supported. This can be done with poles of about 6.5' (2m) in length, placed well in the ground at the end of each row. Support wires can then be secured between the poles, and the canes tied loosely to the wires. Autumn fruiting canes should not need support unless the site is very exposed.

Planting Method

The canes should not be planted too deeply and need to be firmed in very well. Plant so that when firmed in, the top of the root is about 2-3" (5-7cm) below ground level. Water well and continue to do so if very dry in the spring, but do not saturate - they do not like constantly wet feet! And remember, do not use too much wet compost or FYM under the roots either.

Dig a trench about 5-6" (12-15cm) deep and place the canes at 18" (45cm) intervals. Plant summer varieties with 5-6' (1.5-1.8m) between rows. Autumn varieties need not be planted in rows, as they can be grown in a bed system, with canes planted 24" (60cm) apart. Fill back the trench/hole and firm the soil down very well around the canes, ensuring that the top of the root is 2" (5cm) below ground level. Do not plant them too deep. Water well while establishing, but do not saturate.

The ground surface can be covered in a light mulch after planting and renewed each spring, but try to keep it away from the cane base, and do not dig in as roots near the surface will be damaged. Each cane will spread outwards from the original cane, so after two or three years you should have a bed of canes around 2m wide - so leave them plenty of room!

Fruiting and Cropping

Pruning and Care

Newly planted standard canes should be cut down to about 2" (5cm) (or 1" (2.5 cm) for autumn varieties) above ground level in early spring (for autumn varieties) or early summer (for summer varieties). This is to encourage new canes to emerge, and helps a strong root base to form and produce strong canes in the future.

Long canes should produce fruit in their first summer, and do not need to be cut down after planting.

Each year thereafter, the fruited cane can be cut down at the end of the season after fruiting to encourage new cane growth for following year. Take care not to damage the new cane growth that will emerge from the ground within a few feet from the existing canes.

Pollination

Raspberry Canes are self-pollinating, and do need the aid of bees and other insects to pollinate.

Fruit Protection

Birds will try to get their share of your raspberry fruits. There are various methods to help prevent this, like netting and bird scarers, or you may want to invest in a fruit cage.

Pests and Disease

Raspberry canes are susceptible to attacks from both aphid and soil nematode borne viruses, so it is important to start with clean PHPS certified stocks and a clean site. We also find that garlic sprays are generally good at deterring insects from visiting the plants.

Feeding and Watering

Raspberry Canes will not like it too dry, so keep them watered (but not saturated) in dry weather. They may also benefit from some organic fertiliser scattered on the ground in the spring, followed by a ½-1" (1-2.5cm) mulch of well-rotted farmyard manure or compost.